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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDANIAN CONTACT EXPOUNDS ON REASONS BEHIND GID
DIRECTOR'S DISMISSAL

REF: A. 08 AMMAN 3405
[1](#)B. TD-314/093523-08
[1](#)C. TD-314/093816-08
[1](#)D. 08 AMMAN 2673
[1](#)E. 08 AMMAN 2671
[1](#)F. 08 AMMAN 1455

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: PolOff met on January 5 with Dr. Muhammad Al-Momani (protect), host of a current affairs program on Jordan's state-run television. Momani offered his understanding of former General Intelligence Department Director Muhammad Al-Dahabi's dismissal and how the decision to fire him reflected Jordanian internal politics. He also provided information on new Director Muhammad Rath'an Al-Ragqad (Ref A). We cannot vouch for Momani's access to reliable information on these subjects, but report his comments because they largely echo details acquired through other channels (Refs B and C). Among Momani's observations:

- Momani cited as the proximate cause for Dahabi's dismissal the failure of GID to prevent a Jordanian MP linked to GID from burning an Israeli flag in Parliament; but he noted that the move was mainly a delayed reaction to the King's displeasure with the smear campaign against his former Royal Court Chief, Bassem Awadallah (Refs D-F).

- Dahabi had managed to delay his dismissal by playing up a lack of alternatives within GID to his leadership; the fact that others in his circle were also dismissed likely reflected the King's dissatisfaction with that claim and some of Dahabi's activities.

- Media elements who Momani said participated in the purported campaign against Awadallah are now concerned that they may suffer fallout from Dahabi's departure; meanwhile there is talk of Awadallah making a comeback (in some capacity) and his allies are pleased with the changing of the guard at GID.

- Dahabi's replacement, who was not involved in the campaign against Awadallah, has a strong background in counterterrorism and may not be as supportive of continued GID dialogue with Hamas. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The conversation with Momani initially focused on Jordan's reaction to the Gaza crisis. When asked whether he thought the dialogue, renewed last year between GID and Hamas leaders, would continue under the new GID directorship and in the light of events in Gaza, Momani began to hold forth on

Dahabi (Ref A).

Why Was Dahabi Dismissed ... Now?

13. (S/NF) According to Momani, the proximate - although not the underlying - cause for Dahabi's dismissal was the perception that he had mishandled the reaction among Jordanians to the Gaza crisis, particularly MP Khalil Attiyeh's burning of the Israeli flag in Parliament. Per Momani, Attiyah had previously publicly acknowledged that he owed his position in Parliament to the GID. Thus it would have been reasonable to expect the GID could have kept him under control.

14. (S/NF) Another factor that Momani said contributed to Dahabi's dismissal was the GID's renewal of talks with Hamas - which in Momani's view had not gained Jordan much influence over the group. He claimed Dahabi was in close contact with Hamas political office director Khaled Mish'al, and had hopes of getting Mish'al and Hamas "in his pocket." (Note: Momani said this information came from Abdullah Jazi, the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament. He also heard the same from the Editor-in-Chief of the independent daily Al-Ghad, who claimed that the talking with Mish'al was a reason Dahabi was let go. We have no reason to believe either figure would have access to decision-makers on these issues. End Note.)

Bassem Awadallah Was the First Shoe, Was Dahabi the Second?

15. (C) Repeating speculation that we have heard elsewhere, Momani said the underlying reason for the King's displeasure

with Dahabi was the smear campaign against Awadallah that forced the King to dismiss his Royal Court Chief in September. In Momani's view the King made a politically wise decision to drop Awadallah but it was not the King's desired outcome. Dahabi had simply created too much momentum against Awadallah. Momani assessed that Dahabi had managed to delay his own firing - which many had expected to quickly follow Awadallah's departure - by playing up the fact that GID lacked an appropriate successor. According to Momani, since Dahabi's dismissal, people at the online Ammoun News, the government-owned daily Al-Rai, and the nationalist Al-Arab Al-Yawm, have grown fearful that they will suffer consequences given their roles in fomenting a public relations campaign against Awadallah. On the flip side, said Momani, the "Awadallah Camp" is pleased with the Dahabi dismissal. Awadallah had previously told friends that he expected to be "back" in a few months in a position to work on the King's agenda (NFI) in a more private capacity than before. According to Momani, former PM Abd Al-Karim Kabariti has said that people should "think of Awadallah as the King's son, not as his security blanket."

16. (S//NF) In Momani's view, it was significant that not only was Dahabi dismissed, but also senior GID officer Arafat Abzakh and others who shared Dahabi's views. Per Momani, Fawzi Ma'aytah, a senior figure in GID's Internal Section who just dismissed, too - would call up reporters and yell at them when they wrote anything pro-Awadallah and alternatively thank those who wrote against him with money and cars.

17. (S) Note: Awadallah featured in a previous turnover of GID leadership as well. Dahabi in December 2005 had replaced his short-tenured predecessor Samih Asfourah, shortly after the Amman hotel bombings of the previous month, but in many ways Dahabi took up the mantle of Asfourah's predecessor, Sa'ad Khair. Like Khair, Dahabi was an opponent of Bassem Awadallah, a Palestinian-origin reformer who lost a ministerial post during Khair's tenure but later returned as the King's Chief of the Royal Court. Awadallah again lost his job in September 2008 after months of criticism mainly from East Banker commentators and a rumor campaign suggesting his disloyalty. It is worth noting that several months after Awadallah was dismissed in 2005, Khair, his chief antagonist, was also eased out of the GID directorship. End Note.

¶18. (C) Momani said he has met Dahabi's replacement, Muhammad Raqqad, when he (Momani) was facing an "audit" in advance of his appointment as Assistant Dean at Yarmouk University. (Note: Raqqad had headed GID operations in Irbid in 2004. End Note.) According to Momani, he was "nice, polite, very tribally oriented, and doesn't know any English." He has a clean and transparent reputation, and is seen as a "very simple guy." During the 15 minutes the two talked in the university president's office, Raqqad expressed concern about "problems in the faculty of arts," which had too many Islamists in Raqqad's view. Momani assessed that Raqqad's selection was a signal that the King did not like how much time Dahabi was spending focusing externally (NFI).

¶19. (C) Momani cited two reasons in particular for Raqqad's selection. The first (which he subsequently downplayed) was the grumbling in GID that there were many directors (Note: It was not clear whether he meant section chiefs or GID Directors) coming from minority backgrounds, such as Circassians. End Note.). More importantly, Raqqad had stayed neutral on Awadallah. Momani highlighted that Ali Burjak, who had headed up GID's Counter-terrorism Directorate but was recently moved to a posting in Cairo, was back at GID headquarters. He does not get along with Raqqad on a personal level (Burjak, in Momani's account, had wrongly tried to take credit for the takedown of the Jayousi cell of the Al-Tawhid Brigades Organization in 2004, which was actually done by Raqqad's team), but the two do see eye-to-eye on the need to deal extremely firmly with terrorism, and may reject Dahabi's flexible approach in holding dialogue with Hamas.

¶10. (S/NF) Comment: While we cannot vouch for Momani's access to reliable information on subjects relating to the GID and to the King's thinking on such matters, it is worth nothing that they are very similar to details acquired through other channels. While they are also consistent with

some of the rumors mentioned in the media, they paint a more comprehensive picture. End Comment.

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